

Origin Story from Egypt

Introduction

Egypt is a country in northeast Africa. It is located along the Nile River, which is the longest river in the world. Ancient Egypt was one of the world's earliest civilizations, and lasted more than 2,000 years. The ancient Egyptians built majestic pyramids and temples to honor their Gods and kings. They painted the walls of tombs with images and prayers to insure a happy afterlife. The ancient Egyptians also developed a 12-month calendar very much like our modern one. This origin story has been pieced together from inscriptions on pyramid walls, coffins, and pieces of plant-fiber paper called *papyrus* (pronounced puh-PIE-russ).

Origin Story

In the beginning there was nothing but a dark ocean of endless water called Nun (pronounced NONE). Within this ocean, however, rested the formless spirit of the Creator.

One day, weary of this existence beneath the ocean, the spirit of the Creator rose from the water. He found himself inside a beautiful blue lotus blossom surrounded by wide green leaves. As the petals of this flower unfolded, the Creator's spirit took the form of a golden child named Ra (pronounced RAH). He became the Sun God of Egypt.

At first, Ra existed in the world all by himself, and he was very lonely. "I must create other beings like myself so that I may have companions," he thought. "I shall bring forth others to live with me in the world."

So he sneezed, and the God of Air was born, wearing an ostrich feather in his hair. "I shall name you Shu" (pronounced SHOO) Ra announced.

Then he spit, and from his spittle the lion-headed Goddess of Moisture appeared. "You shall be called Tefnut" (pronounced TEHF-nut) Ra proclaimed.

"You bring me great joy," Ra told his new children. "I love you and shall see that no harm ever befalls you."

"Thank you, Father," Shu and Tefnut obediently answered.

"Be careful of the ocean Nun," Ra warned his children. "I do not want you to become lost in its dark waters."

"Yes, we will be careful," the two children answered.

But one day Shu and Tefnut were playing in the waters and did not notice how far they were from home. Soon they found themselves lost in the ocean of Nun.

"Where are we?" cried Tefnut. "The dark waters have swallowed us up!"

"I am suffocating!" wailed Shu. "How shall we find our way out? Oh, Father, please help us!"

Meanwhile, Ra had discovered that his children were missing.

“My most precious creations are gone!” he cried. “Where could they be?”

Although Ra had only one eye, it was a most extraordinary eye. It could be removed from his face and travel independently to any location. Ra removed the eye and spoke to it. “Eye, I give you all my great powers. Go forth, and find my children!”

Eye set off on its search and arrived at the shores of Nun. Carefully it scanned the vast waters. The light that shone from Eye easily penetrated the darkness, and suddenly Eye saw Ra’s children beneath the dark waves.

“Shu! Tefnut!” Eye shouted. “Are you safe? Your father is sick with worry! Let me guide you back to him.”

“I knew Father would find us!” Tefnut exclaimed.

“Show us the way out of this terrifying blackness!” Shu pleaded. “Lead the way, Eye. We will follow.”

With Eye guiding them, the children returned to Ra.

While Eye was away, however, Ra had created a second eye with which to see, which he called the Golden One. Tears of joy streamed from the Golden One down Ra’s cheeks as he saw his children approach.

“Look, Father!” Tefnut exclaimed. “The tears you are shedding are turning into some kind of creature. What do you think these beings could be?”

Amazed, Ra watched as the tears from his second eye turned into living, breathing humans. These became the first humans on earth.

**Stop Here
& Discuss**



- What existed in the beginning, before Ra came into being?
- How did Ra come into being?
- How were Shu and Tefnut created?
- Where did Shu and Tefnut become lost, and how were they found?
- How were humans created?